

Home Rule From Two Opposite View Points.

COMPROMISE OFFER AS PRICE OF PEACE

Mr. Asquith Expected No Enthusiasm Anywhere for His New Proposals.

IT WAS ONLY AN EXPEDIENT

He Believes Ulster Would Not Be Unjustly Treated Under the Proposed Plan.

PROVISIONAL EXCLUSION AS PEACE-FUL MIDDLE WAY

"It appears to me that each—Unionist and Home Ruler alike—can find in some form of provisional exclusion a via media between the surrender of principles and the application of force. Exclusion in any form must be put forward and can only be put forward, not as a solution, but as an expedient, which may pave the way in time for a final settlement."

"Our proposals, as I have said from the first, and as I repeat most emphatically now, are put forward as the price of peace. (Cheers.) No one I believe either in Ireland or here is in love with exclusion for its own sake or upon its own merits. I do not expect that the proposals which I have outlined will be received with enthusiasm in any quarter. (Some Opposition cheers.) What I do ask for them is deliberate and dispassionate consideration."

"To the Home Ruler, Irish or British, they involve at any rate a postponement of a complete and symmetrical system of self-government; to the Unionist, Irish or British, I agree also they imply a necessarily unwelcome acceptance of an Irish Legislature and Executive in Dublin. On the other hand, they hold out to the Home Ruler the prospect of an undivided Ireland brought in time to its full measure of development, as he may hope and believe, not by coercion but by consent. And, on the other hand, to the man in Ulster they offer in the first instance an absolutely free choice, but afterwards the certainty that his 'status cannot be changed without the assent express or implied of the Parliament of the United Kingdom."

"It gives to these counties, it gives to the whole of Ulster in the first instance, the option to say whether they will come within the Bill, and if they vote for exclusion they cannot be brought back into it unless with the assent of a general election of a majority of the electorate of the whole of the United Kingdom.—Premier Asquith, in his speech outlining his proposals for limited exclusion of Ulster from operation of the Home Rule Bill.

Not Running Away

On the occasion of his motion for a second reading of the Home Rule Bill, when Mr. Asquith advanced his proposals for limited exclusion of Ulster as a compromise on the issue, he said that those who had supported the measure in all its stages were as convinced as they ever were (loud cheers) of the soundness both of its principles and of its machinery.

"They regard it as an attempt, at once sincere and considerate, to base on a solid foundation the fabric of Irish self-government," he declared, "and they do not believe—none of them believe—that if they were placed as it stands on the Statute-book to undergo its practical operation would involve injustice or oppression either to classes or to individuals in Ireland." Cheers.

"If then I come here to-day as I do, with suggestions to make which, if accepted, would require substantial modifications, or, to speak with greater accuracy, substantial additions and supplementary provisions to our plan, it is not because we are running away from it (cheers), but because we are above all things anxious that the changes which we believe to be inevitable in the government of Ireland should start under conditions which will secure for them from the first the best chance of ultimate success."

Hazards, in Either Event

He continued as follows, in part: "On the one hand, if Home Rule as embodied in this bill is carried now there is, I regret to say, but nobody can deny it—there is in Ulster the prospect of acute dissension and even of civil strife. On the other hand, if at this stage Home Rule were to be

shipwrecked, or permanently mutilated, or indefinitely postponed, there is in Ireland as a whole at least an equally formidable outlook. (Cheers) and counter cheers. The hazards in either event are such as to warrant in all quarters, I think, not, indeed, a surrender of principle, but any practical form of accommodation and approach which could lead to an agreed settlement. And it is obvious—it is no use blinking the fact—that such a settlement must involve, in the first place, on the side of our opponents the acceptance of a Home Rule Legislature and Executive in Dublin, and, on the other hand, on the side of our supporters some form of special treatment for Ulster—for the Ulster minority—over and above any of the safeguards contained in this bill."

The British Premier referred to the secret "conversations" which he had with Mr. Bonar Law and Sir Edward Carson, conversations which, although they did not result in an agreement, or even in an approach to an agreement, yet made all those who took part in them realize more fully and perhaps more sympathetically the difficulties which were to be encountered by those who honestly desire a settlement.

Difficulties in the Way

"Those difficulties are not imaginary," he said. "They are real and substantial. They are difficulties which are not the creation of one party or another. They are difficulties which arise out of the nature of the case, out of the history of the controversy, out of the temper of men's minds, and the inherent conditions of an unexampled situation. I am sure that so far, at any rate, I shall carry their agreement with me when I say the more we pursued these subjects the less disposed we were to minimize either the range or the seriousness of those difficulties."

Mr. Asquith stated that he and his colleagues had tried honestly and seriously to meet the Ulster difficulty by three different roads. The proposal for "Home Rule within Home Rule" and the plan of Sir Horace Plunkett for a full Irish Legislature but with the provision that any county might, if it so desired, revert to its present condition. Both these roads were blocked, for the time being, and it was necessary to explore a third that of exclusion of Ulster.

Ulster Must Decide

"Now when you have once come to that opinion—although as I have said candidly to the House I should have preferred either of the other roads, if it could have led to agreement—when you have once come to that opinion the practical question which presents itself is how far exclusion in any shape or form can be adopted, without doing violence to the principles which are seriously believed in and maintained on upon the one side and upon the other. We have come to the conclusion that the best and indeed the only practical way, at any rate, far the simplest and the fairest plan, is to allow the Ulster counties themselves to determine in the first instance whether or not they desire to be excluded."

Test for Six Years

"Then as regards the time. As I have indicated this poll will be taken in the requisition of a comparatively small percentage of the electors immediately upon or after the passing into a law of the Bill, and long before it will come into practical operation. Then arise the question, what ought to be the term for which a county, if it pleases to vote for its own exclusion? We have, after much consideration, thought it ought to be a term of six years, and six years not from the taking of the poll, but six years from the first meeting of the Irish Legislature in Dublin. Why have we adopted that period? I will tell the House.

"We have taken the term of six years to ensure that before the period of exclusion comes to an end here shall be first, ample time—six years—to test by experience the actual working of the Irish Parliament. That is why we date the beginning of the six years not from the taking of the poll, but from the first assembling of the new Legislature, and in the second place to ensure also that before that period of exclusion comes to an end there shall be a full and certain opportunity for the electors of the whole of the United Kingdom, both Great Britain and Ireland, with that experience to pronounce whether or not the exclusion shall come to an end."

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SENTENCE OF DEATH STAY OF EXECUTION

Sir Edward Carson Calls for Radical Amendment to the Asquith Proposals

WANTS NO TIME LIMIT SET

Says Parliament Should Decide When and How Ulster is to be Included.

SETTLE IT NOW AND SETTLE IT FOR ALL TIMES.

So far as Ulster is concerned, he exclusion good or bad, and I think we all admit we are only driven into exclusion by the exigencies of the case and of the facts—but be exclusion good or bad, Ulster wants this question settled now and for ever. (Cheers.) We don't want sentence of death with stay of execution for six years. (Loud cheers.)

"Just look at what is offered to us. We are to come into a sort of probation for six years; we are stand watching the Irish Parliament for a period of six years. Can the imagination of the Right Hon. Gentleman at all look at the picture of what will exist in Ulster during those six years? Does he really think that is a great developing community, where people have vast amounts of money out and are prepared to put a vast amount more money out in the expansion and development of their business; does he really mean to say that in view of that, this is statesmanship? Would he not really, if he were talking it over in a friendly way, say it was folly to have these people in this stage of uncertainty as to what was to be the form of government under which they were to live as each election came round?"

"The whole organization would have to be kept up. I don't think that is feasible on the present basis, and I certainly, as far as I am concerned, and knowing these men as I do, believe that they would rather you brought the matter to close quarters to-morrow than leave them in this state of having it dangled before them that they are to be a pawn in your political game for the next six years."

"I say to the country: 'Are you going to allow the Forces of the Crown, which are your forces of any political caucus (cheers and counter cheers), to be used to coerce men who have asked for nothing but that they should remain with you? And if you are, are you going to give up, even for a moment, to a Government which may be here to-day and gone to-morrow, the right yourselves to determine what is real liberty, and this to a Government who have refused when asked to appeal to the country?' (Loud cheers.) Sir Edward Carson, in reply to Premier Asquith's compromise proposals and the threat of Mr. John Redmond that if the offer was not accepted the bill would be carried and enforced, despite all opposition.

Determined Hostility

When Sir Edward Carson rose in the British House to speak upon the compromise proposals of Mr. Asquith, he was greeted with loud cheers. He declared the determined hostility and the loathing of the Irish Unionists, whether Catholic or Protestant, for the whole principle of the bill. He said in part: "The Prime Minister, in the opening passages of his speech, said that in putting forward for the third time the second reading of this Bill, he still looked upon it, and that the majority of this House still looked upon it, as a Bill that might well be passed in its present form; that it was still a sound, statesmanlike measure which he could commend to the House; that nothing had happened in the party of which he is leader to shake in the slightest degree their confidence in the bill; and that was received with considerable applause. Well, let me tell him this on the other hand, that nothing has happened since the introduction of this bill in the slightest degree to shake one jot or tittle of our hostility and loathing to the whole principle of this Bill. (Cheers.) And let me say this, that the loathing is not merely the loathing of the people of Ulster, it is the loathing of every Unionist, Protestant or Catholic, throughout the whole of the south and west of Ireland."

"There was an expression that fell from the Prime Minister on which I should like to say a word, so that there may be no misapprehension. He said he hoped we might enter upon an agreed road to settlement. So far as settlement is concerned in the sense that we are to agree to Home Rule for the rest of Ireland for any benefits that may come to Ulster, we will never agree with the sacrifice of the people of the south and west, whatever may be the benefits which may be offered to Ulster. (Cheers.)"

Principle of Exclusion

"But I approach this question in a somewhat different way. If I am asked to accept these proposals or recommend them—I have no power to accept them—if I am asked to recommend them, I should like to know, am I to recommend them as the price of our agreeing to this Bill for the rest of Ireland, or as an acceptance of its principle, because if so, I shall never do so.

"On the other hand, if you want to disarm Ulster in the sense that Ulster will not resist your proposals by force, if you want to bring about such a state of affairs that you may commence your Parliament, wherever it is in Ireland, in peace and quietness, that is a different proposition. One may accept that proposition and go on by all constitutional means we know of to resist the bill, and in that respect I frankly admit we have made some advance this afternoon by the acknowledgment of the principle of exclusion.

"That, in my opinion, is an important matter, because the moment you admit the principle of exclusion the details of the principle may be a matter that may be worked out by negotiations; but there has been added on to the admission of that principle of exclusion a term which, I believe, has been added in order, that it may make it impossible for us even to enter into any such negotiations."

Sir Edward's Demand

"If the six years are to stand all the old questions will remain. At every election the test will be. If you are returned, will you support a bill to prolong the period of six years or to make it perpetual?"

"If, as has been already pointed out by the leader of the Opposition, at one election you succeed in getting in a Parliament which could do that, you will have at the next election the Nationalist candidate coming forward and saying, 'I am in favor of getting rid of what the last Parliament did, and putting you back in the same position as you were under the Home Rule Bill, so that you might automatically come in.' So during these elections you will have the same question agitating Ulster as agitates Ulster to-day.

"It is all very well to tell me that two elections will take place. Let me test it in this way. Do you think that either of these elections the Ulster question will be a matter which will be very much put before the electors, or in which the electors will be very much concerned, with your great English questions arising?"

Counter-Proposals

"You know it will be impossible, but I will test it in this way—and I ask the serious attention of the Prime Minister to this suggestion: Will you, instead of making your offer in the way it is, put it in this way? 'We agree that when you have had your Referendum you shall stand as you are, members of the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom, until Parliament otherwise orders.' Why not? You will have one, two, three, four, five, six, or a dozen elections. Why, won't you? Because you know very well that, once your bill has passed, you will not get the electors of the country to give their attention back again on to this question, and your whole pretence of Parliament intervening is a sham. It is meant to gain your point with people who will not think this matter out. I ask you now, in the way in which I put it. 'Will you agree that they are to stay out until this Parliament otherwise orders?' If you do not, you do not really mean this as any safeguard to Ulster."

Not Meant to be Accepted?

"To my mind this period of six years is fantastic. Look what you have to do, apart altogether from what I have said. You are going to set up a whole system of government for Ulster, or for the counties that go out—a whole financial system, and, in passing, I would like to know how the finance of this Bill is to be regulated when you do not know how much of Ulster is to be in and how much is to be out? (Cheers.) You will have to deal with education, which, in the North of Ireland, is no easy subject. Are you going to set up all this system of government? Why you will hardly have settled down in your government before you are turned into another one. (Hear, hear.) And that is the way you propose to treat Ulster."

Remove the Time Limit.

"No, Sir, the difficulty will not be less after six years, but it will be greater. For my own part, if you

take your time-limit away I would feel it my duty to go over to Ulster and call a convention. Much, as I think, is impracticable in the system you propose for segregating the various counties, which I think I could easily show, though I do not think it is relevant to the argument I now have in hand. But with this time-limit, and Ulster ready, as I believe it, for any exigency at the present moment I shall not go to Ulster. (Loud cheers.)"

Take away the time-limit and instead put the limit of Parliament as elected by the people whenever they may determine, having regard to the feelings of Ulster itself, and then I shall go to Ulster. I make that offer to the right honourable gentleman. (Some Ministerial cheers.) "The hon. and learned member for Waterford said that, if these proposals were rejected, the path of duty for the majority in this House was clear; they must assert their authority, they must go straight through with the bill, and they must employ all the resources of the Government to enforce it against his Ulster fellow-countrymen. Well, sir, that may be the duty of this House. Men talk very lightly about the enforcement of any law. I know something about the difficulty. You may make up your minds to that, but, if there is a duty upon the part of the government, there is also a duty upon the part of the country, and I appeal from the Government to the country."

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